

HOLOCAUST TESTIMONY

OF

ALINE TISCHLER

Transcript of Audio-taped Interview

Interviewer: Lucille Fisher
Date: September 17, 1981

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Gratz College
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AT - Aline Tischler [interviewee]

LF - Lucille Fisher [interviewer]

Date: September 17, 1981

Tape one, side one:

LF: This is Lucille Fisher interviewing Mrs. Aline Tischler on September 17, 1981. I guess it would be a good idea to start by telling me where you were born and when and a little about your family?

AT: Okay. I was born in 1912 in Silesia. In Schlesien. Then about when I was three years old, my father died, my mother was a young widow and I was about not even three years. She moved down to Pommern where she had...

LF: To where?

AT: To Pommern¹ [Pommerania -now Poland].

LF: How do you spell that?

AT: P-o-m-m-e-r-n. It's like you say Massachusetts.

LF: Oh, a state, yes.

AT: A state, you know. And in a small town, my mother opened a business and when I was about five years old, she married again. And we were in a small town about 4,000 people and there were ten Jewish family and two children, me and another girl. No other children.

LF: No other Jewish children?

AT: No, no other Jewish children and we didn't have a synagogue. We had a cemetery, a Jewish cemetery, but not a synagogue, and we went in the next town, was about a distance from 25 kilometers to the holidays, down with my mother's sister, 25 miles distance. And there we went to the holidays. We went once a week with a car or with a train, you know it took some half an hour. And there I went to the cantor took Jewish lessons and through the High Holidays my parents were there. It was the connection with the bigger town and the synagogue. Now my mother married again, I was probably five or five and a half years old.

LF: You were the only child?

AT: I was the only one. And my parents had later on, over the years you had a very good business, dry goods, and men's and ladies' wear. And I grew up in this little town. I went to school 'till 17 years to the, more than high school, a degree.

LF: As you were growing up, did you feel any antisemitism in the town?

AT: Oh, in the small towns, there were always antisemitism.

LF: Always?

AT: Always. I mean, I had other school children they didn't wanted to walk up to play with me and they called me names.

LF: Even long before the Hitler era?

¹ A region of pre WWI Germany - now North Western Poland.

AT: *Ja*. It always were. They didn't show it so much. I mean, there was, there was a part of people, they never would go to a Jewish store, in a small town. It was there. You accepted this and you didn't have anything to do with them or they didn't wanted anything to do with the, with the Jewish people. And even in school, they called me names. It was an antisemitism, it was always, but we had to take it, and we got used to. You know, it was, we didn't take it so tragic. And, but later on, in 1932, '33, then when Hitler came, then really all my school friends, I was already then 16, 17 years old, all my school friends and all my--they were all in the *Hitler Jugend* and in the SS and I hardly could go on the street. I mean...

LF: You were about how old then?

AT: In '32, I was about 18, 19.

LF: So you had felt the antisemitism all along?

AT: Yes, but we didn't take it so tragic. I mean, we didn't even go out and we didn't go to places there. We Jews, we lived differently anyway, you know. But in small towns what was always antisemitism. Yes. But then in '32, '33, it got very bad because every, every girl and boy from my years from school--and in the small town you know everybody. You know, it's very, very disturbing. And there they started. You had the corner house, us on the corner. They started to sing. You know, the *Hitler Jugend* [youth], or the SS, and everything and it was very bad. Later on, by about '33, '34, they put an SS man by the door and they didn't let the customers come in. We had the special customers from the, from the country, you know, from the *Bavern* [peasant].

LF: Yeah. You mean they came...

AT: They came in town to the market, and they, they sold, they sold a pig, they sold goose, chicken and potatoes and then they came and bought, you know.

LF: Bought like on an installment plan or something, ya.

AT: Right.

LF: And they still continued to come?

AT: They wanted to come, but sometimes they put an SS man before the door. We had the corner and then the people went around the corner and they came to the second door, to the back door, you know. But in '34, '35, it started already, very bad. Then in '38, in '37, my mother sent me to Berlin to a relative because it was really hard to go, I couldn't go on the street, I was sitting in the store.

LF: How far away was Berlin?

AT: Oh, you went with, we went first with a regular train, and then you took the express to Berlin, about six hours, seven hours by train.

LF: So it's about 200 or 300 miles away?

AT: Oh *ja*. 200, 250 miles. If not more.

LF: And your mother sent you off there?

AT: She sent me to a cousin of hers. There were two daughters, too and then when I was there, I was I don't come back anymore. I want--if I take a job, anything, but

I don't want to come back anymore. My mother didn't want it, but I stayed on and then I worked in Berlin.

LF: But tell me something, before we talk about that. Did you, your family, belong to any Jewish organization, for the synagogue, before the Nazis began to come?

AT: *Ja*, my father was one from the Jewish Veterans, the war veterans.

LF: He had served in...

AT: He had served, yes, yes.

LF: In World War I?

AT: Right, and then I belonged to the Jewish *Jugendbund* [Youth Association] from the next town where my cousins were in. You know, sometimes every two, three weeks they met, and on Sundays we went over there too, you know. It was only 25 kilometer.

LF: Were there any Jewish organizations there?

AT: There were youth--they had for the *Jugendbunds*, for the youngsters.

LF: B'nai Brith?

AT: *Ja*. and they had--no not B'nai Brith. There were a lodge for the business people. My father belonged. And they belonged to the Veterans and we came together.

LF: But he did serve in the National Army?

AT: *Ja* he [unclear]. When he came from the war, I think in 1917, '18, he married my mother, I mean, I was about five and a half years old.

LF: Do you remember how your family reacted to when Hitler was appointed as Chancellor?

AT: Yes. We didn't take it so serious. We thought it, well, it goes over. Nothing will happen. It just--we didn't believe it was coming so bad. That was the mistake we made.

LF: The mistake.

AT: And everybody was thinking this. I mean nobody took it so tragic. They thought that it its goes over, you know. Just a *momento*, and it will die.

LF: Was there a council of Jews? Was there a group formed to discuss what was happening to...

AT: No.

LF: Nothing.

AT: Not in our little town. And not in the next town, not in there where my aunt and my uncle lived. I mean everybody tried the business to make it and to live. And the only thing, it's got that you couldn't work anymore. They started to sing on your corner, or they started to to make the *Hakenkreuz* [Swastika] on the wall or something like this. But really serious, we thought it's nothing would happen. This came then to in November in the *Kristall Night*.

LF: Well, let's come back before the *Kristall* Night. What about that boycott of 1933, you know, the, the Aryan paragraph² where you couldn't...

AT: We had, we had in the store, we had about six, seven girls working and we had a man working for all around, like a, like a janitor. And we had, and we had in a house, we had a girl too for the housework. And when then came you had to let them go. You only could have one in a household over 45 years. Not the young one.

LF: No young girl.

AT: *Ja*, and in the store, they wondered about the girls that came in the store. They say, "I have to make a living, I am working, it's my job," and so but later on they went away too. And later on, we had only three or four and in the house we had one, an older girl.

LF: And what happened to the business then?

AT: Oh, the business got less and less because the people didn't wanted to come in the store. They didn't let the people.

LF: Had you thought, did the family think about leaving Germany then? Was there any thought in your mind of leaving Germany?

AT: No. No. One cousin of mine, she went in 1935, she went to Israel as a tourist. And she married there another boy from the same town, just so she could stay there, you know. This was the first excitement what we really, really got when this cousin went to Israel. And then a year later, another cousin of mine went to Israel. But first of all, my mother, I was the only child, she never would. It was a big thing that she sent me to Berlin, you know. Because otherwise I wouldn't live today I think if I would have stayed in the little town. Thanks God. My parents moved away too. They came to Berlin around beginning of '38, something.

LF: You went to Berlin in '30, what, '30?

AT: I went to Berlin in about '36, '37.

LF: '37, and you stayed there.

AT: I married in '37. It was '36 about.

LF: You went in '36, you met your husband in Berlin?

AT: *Ja*.

LF: And you married in Berlin?

AT: I married in Berlin and my parents came in the beginning of '38, when the Nazis took over the store.

LF: They had to give the store to the Nazis?

AT: Yes.

LF: How did that happen? What happened there?

AT: Oh, they gave everything and he moved right away in. My parents were in and they were just occupying one room and waiting that they move out and he moved in

² Aryan paragraph - To exclude Jews from organizations, parties, and eventually all public life. *Holocaust Chronicle*, pp.45-55.

right away and took the store over. They made a lease to buy it, to rent, but nothing came out of it. You know. Later on then, after the 9th of November, nothing came out of that. But my parents were already then came to Berlin. I found an apartment around the corner.

LF: Did they have money when they came?

AT: *Ja*, I mean, they were in business all the years.

LF: So they were able to take.

AT: They were able to take the funds they had.

LF: Cash?

AT: Yes. They moved to Berlin. It was about in 1938. End of 1938, I think it was.

LF: Then you talked a little bit about their contact with the non-Jews. The man that took the store over...

AT: Yes, I went--his mother was a saleswoman in our store and I went from the first year, I went to school with him, together in one place all the years. And he even came sometimes and we made schoolwork together.

LF: Homework.

AT: His mother was working in our store. And he took over the business and then he was--he was a Nazi too, but he was not bad, because he really wanted the business and other places they took over and he rented it. Then later on he didn't pay anything, you know.

LF: Were there any other non-Jews with whom you had good or bad relations during that time?

AT: Oh, no. In Pommern, in this little town, were ten family Jews. The doctor was a Jew, the pharmacist was a Jew and with my parents was the biggest store. That was one; he had dishes and household good, a very, very big store. Then was a tailor with, with a alteration business. And then there was some, some very old religious Jews there. That was my grandmother, my mother's stepmother, and my mother took her over from Poland and she lived there by this old religious people. They were very religious, these people and real old fashioned, you know, and around ten, ten families, I mean...

LF: And how big was the town?

AT: About 3,999 persons. If I was home it was 4,000.

LF: If you were home, that was a small town.

AT: It was a small town. Yes. It was a very small town with the marketplace. Around the marketplace were all the store and the business and the hotel and so forth like the little town, you know, yes.

LF: So then your parents came to see you in Germany, in Berlin?

AT: *Ja*, and I...

LF: And that was around 1938.

AT: End of '38.

LF: End of '38. Yes.

LF: And then was *Kristallnacht*³, right? In November, '38

AT: In November. The 9th of November was the *Kristall* night.

LF: What happened then?

AT: In the morning time, we lived in one house; we lived in the garden house. I mean, the main house and then were gardens and then was another house there.

LF: Was your family working at that time?

AT: No, no, no. My parents weren't working.

LF: And your husband?

AT: My husband was working. And, and this days, when it was the *Neunts* [ninth] of November, my husband picked up my father and they went on the street to look what's going on.

LF: You mean, it happened during the night and the next day.

AT: In the night and in the morning time and when I, when we woke up in the morning time, and I opened the shades, I saw the janitor from our house coming and putting so much glasses in the trash. And then he came again with a big bucket of glasses and when my husband went downstairs and he told us, he told him, "Don't go out, don't go out. Everything is broken, every window is broken."

LF: This was a non-Jew?

AT: Yes. It was the old man, the janitor that run the house. And my husband picked up my father and they went in town in the bigger street to see what happened.

LF: Did they realize that this was an outburst against the Jews?

AT: Yes.

LF: And yet they went?

AT: They went on the street. My husband doesn't look Jewish. They went, it was very dangerous because they took the people right from the street, but my husband and my father they went.

LF: They went.

AT: And I went in my mother's apartment and around 11:30, I remember pretty well, I even know what my mother cooked for dinner. Because we were supposed to eat there and here we were waiting for my husband and my father to come at 1:00 for lunchtime, and she cooked sauerkraut and hamburgers and she had a pudding and we were waiting to eat there. At 11:00 my mother said to me, "You remember you had the big stoves where you put the coal in to heat the, to heat in the apartment." My mother told me, "Take a cup of coals and put in the stove." And I had the shovel in my hand with a couple coals on there and the door bell ring. I went and opened it up and there were two Gestapo men. "We want Mr. Zander." That's my father. And I said, "He is not home." "Where is he?" I said, "I don't know where he is." "When do you expect him?" I said, "To lunch around 1:00." "Alright, we will be back." And then they came between 11:00 and 1:00. They came about three, four times and every time they wanted my father.

³ November 9th - Night of Broken Glass. *Holocaust Chronicle*, p.116.

LF: Not your husband?

AT: Not my husband, they wanted my father. And because my father was new, you know, he came from a small town, probably they had the names, I don't know why. They didn't have my husband's name. Maybe they were in our house, in our apartment, because I closed up and went to my mother's apartment.

LF: I see.

AT: I wasn't home. I don't know what, what happened around the corner, you know. I had an apartment right around the corner, maybe five minutes. I didn't go home any more then. And then my father and my husband came and we told them they were here and my husband said, "Alright, we go right away. We leave right away." Nobody was thinking about eating, you know, when my mother cooked. And my husband, my husband, he left and my father said, "No, I don't run away. I am a soldier and I am a good German and I am a good citizen and *ja. Ich hab nicht was schlechtes getan*. [I didn't do anything bad.] I never did. I always was a good soldier." And something like that. And he was weeping. And my husband had the door and out he was.

LF: Where did your husband go?

AT: My husband went to one from his men who worked for him, a *Mechanik* [mechanic].

LF: A non-Jew.

AT: And he went there in the garage, the *Mechanik*, and he was there in this, where he worked. There they didn't think somebody was hiding there.

LF: [unclear]

AT: He didn't come home this day. He came home then the next day. And my father, they were very nice with him. They say he should take extra socks along, "Maybe you will be cold," and they put a sweater on. They were very nice to him and they took him away. And that was the 9th of November.

LF: And then?

AT: And then almost every day my mother received a postal card from the concentration camp Sachsenhausen⁴ and--the first day we were looking, we went to the *Polizai Presidium* [police headquarters] and all over to see what happened, if we could get him home again. But there were thousands of thousands of men, and men and women looking for their relatives. And then we heard they, they are no more there, that they the cars, they took him away, you know. And then somebody said he is in Sachsenhausen. Sachsenhausen, there they brought them. But before you didn't know anything from Sachsenhausen, you know. This was a concentration camp and my mother always got postal cards. "I have a friend, he has birthday, send me \$100, send me \$200," every day he was writing for money. And every day my husband or my mother sent a check. And then in...

LF: What do you think that money was for?

⁴ Sachsenhausen -concentration camp near Berlin. *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust*, p.1321.

AT: They took it away from him. They took everything. Even, even he signed over two houses. He signed them over. They forced him to.

LF: The two houses, were where in?

AT: In the little town.

LF: In the little town?

AT: *Ja*. They forced him to take away and then he wrote, "I have a good friend and the friend has, has birthday and send me money and send me this and I have to make a present." They forced him to do that. And then there was an action, then he wrote a card, "I will come home but we will leave the country." But we didn't understand the card, what he meant. I mean, we didn't, you couldn't take it, it didn't work in, in your head.

LF: It didn't register in your mind.

AT: It didn't register. And then...

LF: Were you frightened? Had you heard stories of what had happened to people yet?

AT: Sure we heard. Mostly they said then, once they say everybody was dead, they aren't living any more and now first they started with the men and then they will start with the woman and the children. But it was so that you couldn't think about this. It was too much. It came--everything came together.

LF: And then?

AT: And then my father came home. He wrote a card that he is coming home and my husband and my mother and I, we went to the station to wait for the, for the train.

LF: He told you when he was going to arrive?

AT: Yes. "I come home, with this come home," but...

LF: How long was he away?

AT: He was away from the 9th of November 'till about the end of January. Then he came home and then they came home and we have to leave the country.

LF: What did he say about his life there?

AT: Oh, he was--you didn't, we didn't recognize him. I mean, he was only there two and a half months, but we didn't recognize him. We were standing on the plat--on the train and we were looking all over and we didn't find him. Then we wanted to go away and all of a sudden we saw that somebody standing there, real bent over and shaking and everything. And my mother looked at him and she said, "Look there, look there." She couldn't even talk. And there was my father with, with his suit on and in the suit he had his toothbrush, right here was a toothbrush. And all bent over and all yellow looking and he was really--he was--if they wouldn't have let him out, he wouldn't live. It was awful. He couldn't even talk.

LF: Had he been mistreated there, had they beaten him, or...

AT: No, they didn't beat him up because he, he always--they make him, they made him probably every time sign something. He always had to give something away.

LF: I am going to turn over the tape if you will excuse me. I'm such a mechanic!
AT: It's the same one.

Tape one, side two:

AT: They really left him out because they told him he has to leave the country. Now he came home, and, but we didn't--where should we go? Nobody knows. We didn't have no relatives in America. My parents were too old for Israel, at that time it was Palestine, to go, and then all of a sudden, the Jewish Family Service or the Jewish Organization, I don't know which one, they came up, "You can go to Shanghai, China, if you buy just a ticket from Italy."

LF: Do you think that your father came back because he had been a veteran, because he had been a soldier?

AT: No. They probably, they left a couple men out, they got already money every couple days, they got \$100 or \$200.

LF: They got what they could.

AT: And probably it was, I don't know, they left maybe ten or twelve people out, you know, and under this, this people were my father. And then my parents and my husband and his two brothers, they all went and got tickets for Shanghai.

LF: That's your husband's brothers, they hadn't been taken or touched or anything?

AT: No, they weren't, they weren't because they were hiding.

LF: And they bought the tickets for Shanghai?

AT: We all bought tickets for Shanghai. But we didn't wanted to go. What you know if somebody comes up to, "You can go to China." I mean, we bought the tickets, but we didn't make not anything that we really wanted to go.

LF: Yet even after all this fear?

AT: Even after all this.

LF: How do you explain that?

AT: It came up you can go to China, now what you know from China. A lot of people said, "If I have to die I can die here, I don't have to go to China to die." You know. And then they came out, every week, they came to ask, "How far are you? When you are leaving? When you are going?"

LF: From the Jewish Organization?

AT: They came to in our house and they came to my parent's house. Every week they came.

LF: How long did it take you to make up your mind?

AT: Then we, we went and we said we are leaving in March. This went on from the end of *Januar, Februar*, March. Then they came and they said, "Next ship that we know, there is a ship on the 25th of March and then this we want you on." And then we started to sell our belongings. I had an nice little apartment, everything new. But then the, the Gestapos came and say, "I take this, and I take this, and I take this," and they took it out. I mean it didn't come that I had to sell it. They took it away. When they liked

something and they came up, up in the house, in the apartment, and if they liked something, they took it. Or they came with a truck and they took the bedroom set and everything.

LF: Now tell me, were other members of the family, your family or your husband's family, were they deported anywhere? Did you know of people that were being deported?

AT: Yes, my husband, from my father, he had a couple of sisters, married sisters. They lived in the country and they did, we never knew, we never find out what happened to them. *Ja*. And then from the small town, I am talking where we lived, people we know about there, you know, nobody knows what happened to them. And my grandmother and these old people, these were one from the first ones that they took away. We heard that. There was nobody left.

LF: So then you got ready and you left for...

AT: Then it got serious and we started to, to buy the big trunks, suitcases, and then we start packing and they picked up the trunks and the suitcases. They picked them up and then they were in a big place, bigger place the suitcases. And from this suitcases they stole everything. When we got our cases in Shanghai, they were half full. Even from the transfer store, they took everything out. But we saved our life. We went to Italy and we went four weeks to Shanghai.

LF: You first went on the boat to Italy.

AT: No, to Italy we went with the train.

LF: The train. The Joint Distribution⁵ took care of that.

AT: No, that we [unclear] took [unclear].

LF: But who handled the routing and where you were going to go?

AT: This was the Jewish Family Service.

LF: The Jewish Family Service.

AF: *Ja*. But, we paid ourselves. I mean, this time it was...

LF: So you went to Italy. Where in Italy?

AT: Naples.

LF: Naples. And you stayed there how long?

AT: I think one or two days we had 'till we went on the boat.

LF: And you went on the boat. What kind of boat did you go on?

AT: Big Italian liner. The [unclear] was a very, very big Italian liner and was all, all the Jews on I mean. They chartered, I think they chartered the [unclear-obstructive noises on tape].

LF: Tell me, did Jews were Jews going, did you know of Jews going to Shanghai from other countries or was it just from Germany, that you knew?

AT: No, they went from Austria, too.

LF: From Austria, too. To Shanghai. And how long did it take you to get there?

⁵ JDC-Joint Distribution Committee. The primary vehicle for relief operations. *The Holocaust Chronicle*, p.633.

AT: We left on the 25th of March 1939, and we came on the 24th of April, we arrived in Shanghai. It took four weeks.

LF: And tell me about your life there, and when you got there, and what it was like.

AT: When we got there, they, they picked us up and they took us on, on big trucks, maybe ten trucks. And we were standing on the trucks and they took us to, to bombed out schools, bombed out houses, big houses, and they, in Shanghai, and they make camps out of this and we came there. And in the biggest room there were 15, 20 couples in the room. They have bunk beds. Bunk beds and this was all. Bunk beds. So many bunk beds there were in one room, so many people were there.

LF: How many people got to Shanghai?

AT: About 25,000. 24,000.

LF: From Austria and...

AT: From Austria and from Germany. Yes.

LF: Only.

AT: Only. Because the Polish people, they didn't have any chance. This was too early for them.

LF: So tell me about life in--you were in Shanghai how long?

AT: In Shanghai, we were 8 ½ years.

LF: And what did you do there? What was life like there?

AT: In the beginning, we were in the camp, in one camp, and you couldn't do anything because you, right away, you got very sick. Dysentery. You couldn't drink the water. You had to be careful what you eat and most people, got, was always sick. You always were sick. There was always some dysentery or some, some stomach, upset stomach, and dizziness, and so. There was not one person who only can say he was well because all the years there was always--and they...

LF: Was there medical care there? Was there a doctor?

AT: In the beginning, in the beginning, there was right emergency. I just want to tell you that all the men had to work outside to clean up the houses, because there were dead babies, bones, and everything from--it was not cleaned up and everything. The men had to work. It was very hard to clean this place up and we women cleaned inside up. You know, the rooms. And right away, my husband was the second, they got, all got *temperatur*; and it was the scarlet, scarlet fever. My husband was one from the first one who got scarlet fever. It was a big epidemic. It was very, very bad. A lot of people died, right away on scarlet. They made, was a real big brick building, a bombed out school and in this school they made, made an emergency hospital. And my husband was right in there and every third, fourth person was sick. I was in the sick rooms from the camp. And my husband was in the, in the isolation hospital and my mother was sick. We all was so sick, because you couldn't drink the water. You couldn't eat everything you had to; everything in boiling water. And then you didn't had--you got a piece of bread in the morning time,

with a cup of tea, no sugar, just a tea. And then you got in noontime, you got a dish of soup or rice or vegetable, and in the evening time you got again a piece of white bread, eight ounces bread you got.

LF: They had no cooking facilities for you.

AT: They made them, later on, they had made a kitchen and they cooked.. But they cooked then. They cooked the bones and the soup and the vegetables and they had the big buckets of rice. We got this once a day. The beginning was that we had to stand in line, all the time. For something to eat, you know, and it was very, very hot, about 110 °, 115°. And to the beginning, the people, they, they died like flies. It was very, very bad. You always were sick there.

LF: And what did you do there? What did you do in the camp?

AT: Well, later on then, you know it's funny. You get used to, even to the miseries you get used to. And my husband was laying on the bunk bed upstairs and I downstairs, and if we wanted to talk they shook the bed, you know. I'd say, "What's the matter?" said, "I can't sleep, I can't sleep. Something goes around in my head. We have to do something. We have to try to earn a dollar. We have to try something." Everybody asked, "Do you have something to read?" because there was nothing to do, you know. You had to sweep out or you had to clean out, something like this. And the men had to work outside and sweep and clean and the most that they did was laying on the bed. And we were to sell everything that we have in the suitcases. We would sell it and we will buy books. I want to make open up and lend books. I want to open up a library. And then the next day we really tried and we sold what, what we could sell, what we had; on wedding presents, on little crystal, little, mostly everything was broken or stolen, but what we had, we sold it. And then my husband and I, we went and we asked everybody, "Do you have a book, do you have a book?" And we bought a books from them and then we had about, I think, about 80, 90 books. They rented us a little like a little corner. It was not a room. It was under the steps, a little corner. And there we numbered the books and we wrote our names in the books and we made the [unclear] and we made everything and we opened. Then my husband went to a Chinese man and he built, I have the picture, I had to show it to you, I wasn't thinking last night, and he built us a *Wagen* [wagon] with glasses to open up and we opened up a library. And we went from one camp to the other one and this time, every four weeks came a ship. A lot of people came and every week we were waiting there, we saw the lists, somebody we knew. A lot of people came we knew, you know. You would see this and we went to the ship to wait for the people and that's the way we started a library.

LF: And I guess it wasn't so much of a money making job?

AT: No, it was not, but it gave us something to do. *Ja*, because the inflation, and the money wasn't worth much. Today you got about, like, let's say money, 10 cents tomorrow, it was worth 5 cents, but it gave us something to do. We didn't have to, to lay on the beds all the time.

LF: Were there children in the camps?

AT: Yes, sure.

LF: Did they try to set up education for the children?

AT: They made a school there. They had a Jewish school. It was the Kadoori⁶ school. I think the school was there, the Jewish school, or they made it, I don't remember. And the children went to school, which I remember. Yes, they went to school there. Because I know we have friends here, she has two daughters. We saw the daughters. I know them when they were in Shanghai. And they 6 and 10 years old. And last week we saw them and the oldest is now 50.

LF: Did you get reports about Jews being murdered in large numbers?

AT: No. Years and years we didn't have any mail in Shanghai. We didn't receive any mail from Shanghai. You were...

LF: All cut off.

AT: Off.

LF: So you didn't know what was happening?

AT: No, we didn't know. To the beginning, to the beginning, the sister of my mother was writing and then about then, we got the message that the, that the brother died. But we never know that he was killed, you know. They took him to, to help in the street with the garbage and the one Nazi took a big garbage can and throw it to him and kill him instantly. But this we know from later on then.

LF: Did they have services in the camp, or religious...

AT: Yes. Yes. We had service, and we had even entertainment. There, you know the people from Austria, they were very happy. They were much more happier than the German. The German aren't, not so. They were getting more depressed, I think. People, they even were, they were singing and operettas and the people. Then, over the years, 8 ½ years, we always said what can happen. The best things we don't, we get surprised. What can happen? We can die here, or we can go out here or we can get better. It couldn't get worse.

LF: But you weren't getting any word from whoever was running the camp? From the Joint Distribution or the Jewish Family Service or from the Jewish Agency?

AT: No.

LF: They never shared with you, you know, what was happening?

AT: No. And later on, we were--they had a paper there, later on, there were one lawyer, he always had a 7:00 [unclear], and he was talking about the news, what is going on, you know.

LF: Well, how did he hear about it?

AT: Probably from radio somewhere, I think so.

LF: And then you...

⁶ Kadoori School-named after Sir Horace Kadoori-a wealthy Sephardic Jew. From the book *Once My Name Was Sara* by I. Betty Grebenschikoff.

AT: And then he always was, every night at 7:00, everybody went there and he was talking, what was in the paper and what he heard and what there.

LF: Did you hear about mass murders of Jews?

AT: Not in the beginning, not in the beginning. Later on then, maybe to the end. We had bombs, too. We were attacked, too.

LF: Tell me about that.

AT: It was on the 17th of June, exactly.

LF: What year?

AT: 1945. No, 19--, I was, yes, it was '45. My son was born in '45. And everyday the Americans came and they bombed some Japanese factory or something like that. Some people, they were so afraid, they were sitting already in the morning time with all they had, maybe money or a little package or little suitcase and were waiting when the bombs come and they could run in the big jail. There was a very, very big jail and they opened up that that people could run in there.

LF: Like a shelter?

AT: Like a shelter. And so they came every day and sometimes every night. I myself belonged to, to the Red Cross, you know, to the emergency. We had a little case emergency trays and if something happened, we women, the younger one, we went outside when something happened.

LF: You were aware though that they were American bombers.

AT: We knew them, they came in the morning time, they came in the noontime, they came at nighttime.

LF: Were there people killed?

AT: But we never know they wanted to bomb a Jewish factory and the bombs fell in the camp.

LF: Oh, I see.

AT: And we had about, I don't know how many, but there was quite a people, they were on the street, and they were standing in line for the food. They got killed. I mean, it was a very, very exciting day. It was on the 17th of June in '45. Because in September my, I was pregnant then, on the 3rd of September, right on the day when the war was over and we got the messages, first, second, third of September. Then I went into maternity and my son was born. He was the first baby born in in the peacetime. *Ja*.

LF: Tell me, so you were liberated really just about the time your son was born? How long after you heard that the war had been won were you able to leave China?

AT: Oh, the war was over in '45. It was about--in Shanghai we hear everything--and on the beginning of September, one, second, third September. But then, if you didn't had an affidavit or you didn't have papers--there were people; they had, right away, in a couple weeks, the papers to go to America, if they had relatives, or to England, or back to Germany, wherever the people went. But we didn't had any relatives and any

papers, they didn't know where to go. We stayed here 8 ½ years. We stayed there almost another two years.

LF: Almost another two years after the war was over?

AT: We came over here in '47. We came in November '47. That was more than two years we stayed on.

LF: Who sponsored you, the...

AT: My husband has a cousin in New York, a doctor, and my parents, my father, my stepfather, my father had a nephew. He had a big store in New York. He is, with bandages and everything what you need.

LF: Surgical supplies.

AT: Surgical equipment, *ja*. And he gave, he gave my parents an affidavit and the doctor gave us an affidavit but my parents got the affidavit earlier. They went earlier to San Francisco, but we had to stay and wait. We stayed almost one from the last one. It was, it was enough people there but a lot of had left already. A lot left to Israel, too. *Ja*. And a lot went back, the very old they went back.

LF: To Germany?

AT: Yes, or to Vienna. They went back.

LF: And then you went to San Francisco?

AT: We went from Shanghai to San Francisco.

LF: Yeah.

AT: And then we were a couple weeks in San Francisco because on the way, on the way we went *über* [over] Philippines. My brother, the brother from my husband, he could stay in Manila. And he was in Manila and we went over the Philippines we came from Shanghai and we stopped there two days. The boat stopped, you could go over Philippines or you could go over Honolulu. And we choose [unclear] and we two days in Manila.

LF: You saw your brother-in-law?

AT: *Ja*, and when we went back on the boat, I, we go very high temperature and I got diphtheria. And I had the whole boat in quarantine. And we came to San Francisco; they didn't let me go down. I got dressed and I said, "I feel better," and they didn't let me go. They didn't let me go to nobody, and my husband and my son, they went down. My parents were waiting and then I had to wait 'til the ambulance came by, on another gangway, and took me in, right to the in hospital. This was the beginning of America. I was very, very sick. I was several weeks very sick in San Francisco. And then when I got better, but I got a reaction from Penicillin. I was very, very--at one minute I had a big ear, the next minute I had a big nose.

LF: Swelling.

AT: Swelling. That's are the reaction from Penicillin. And I had it very, very bad because on the, on the ship, they only could give my Penicillin. They gave me so much Penicillin they didn't know, they came every, every half an hour. And I was laying

in the little bunker where they put the, the drunken soldier in. Where only a bunk bed, nothing else. The drunk soldiers, they came in there and there they kept me.

LF: Isolated.

AT: Very isolated. And then when I came to Philadelphia, I went--was really sick here.

LF: Well, how did you get to Philadelphia? You did...

AT: We were in San Francisco and from San Francisco they were sending people to different towns. Now one couple friends of ours, they went to Philadelphia, we hear they went to Philadelphia. Now every--it was only names for us. Cincinnati, Philadelphia, Detroit, Chicago, they was only names. We didn't know from anything. But since this couple went to Philadelphia, we said, "Alright, we go to Philadelphia, too." Because they didn't send people--you couldn't stay in San Francisco and you couldn't stay in New York. They [unclear], otherwise in smaller bigger city, everybody, everybody took some from this family. Now and that's the way we went to...

LF: You came here and I guess the Jewish Family Service worked with you.

AT: *Ja*, they picked us up at the train station and then we were in South Philadelphia in the Shelter, Shelter House they called it. There we were a couple weeks 'till we found an apartment. And my husband and I, we started right away to work.

LF: Your husband did what, what did he do?

AT: He started in a big company, Owens Illinois.

LF: Owens Illinois.

AT: *Ja*, and he started there and he stayed on there 26 ½ years.

LF: And you did what?

LF: And I was a sales person. I started on Ninth Street, by the stands on Ninth Street, I started there. From Ninth Street, I advanced to South Street and my lady, always a better store, it was my line, you know, and from there I went to Columbia Avenue, to Wisen's. I advanced every time.

LF: Your mother took care of your son?

AT: And...

Tape two, side one:

LF: Alright now. So you were--your parents helped you to...?

AT: *Ja. Ja.*

LF: Take care of your child. Did you [unclear] your parent ever able to work here?

AT: Oh, my father was, when we came here, he was fatigued for five years. He couldn't work anymore. He was a very old, sick man and my mother was very high diabetic. They couldn't work here. They were under the Family Service and my parents, for my parents was it not too good. My mother, she never could adjust to--first of all they couldn't learn the language anymore. My father was too nervous and really shaken up.

LF: Sure.

AT: And they were under the Family Service the first year and then they took them off and the office told them, "You have to be citizen, you have to be citizen." But they didn't tell them why they have to be citizen. And I was working, my husband was working and we didn't understand so much. And they forced my parents to to make the citizenship. And the minute there was the citizenship, they didn't have any more from the Family Service. They didn't, you know?

LF: Were they able to get Public Assistance?

AT: Wait a minute, this I want to tell you. This is really a [unclear]. If I think of this, I think this was the saddest what could happen to my parents. This was--my mother never could come over this, and then they cutted off the help. Then they told them, "You will get the money from where else." And they, and they made that my parents got Public Assistance and my parents didn't know what it was then. This was very hard to to get in your minds that you are in Public Assistance. And then there was a caseworker and she always came every week to my mother. And my mother said this in her very bad English, "I am not so poor, I have to take the poor people have to take. But what we get money from Germany, and I will live again and I get money from Germany now." This, and she said, "When are you getting money from Germany?" And she came every week and she asked my mother, "Do you get money from Germany?" And then one day my parents got a letter, "If you get money from Germany you have to give it to the owners." And then my parents didn't had the money from Germany and they didn't wanted to believe it. And my mother--and we then, we didn't have no money, but it will come. But she didn't know it, they, they wanted to take it away. They wouldn't even come say this. What was--and then when, one day, there came two men and they, they took the bankbook away from my parents and they went to the First Pennsylvania and they had about \$600 and my mother said, "This is my burial money. I can die, and we are buried with everything," but all in her very bad English. They never gave her somebody to translate to explain everything. It was very, very bad.

LF: Very painful.

AT: I am telling you this was the saddest story what my parents had in America. My parents got--later on then, later on, years later on, we hear then that some people said, "No, I don't make the citizenship, I won't be so stupid."

LF: Well, I don't know whether the citizenship had anything to do with it.

AT: *Ja*, only there. So long you were not citizen, the Jewish Federation helped, helped the people. Later on we hear that then and then...

LF: Because there is a difference between residency and citizenship.

AT: Yes.

LF: You know if you are a resident in the State of Pennsylvania for a year, for example, you are eligible for a...

AT: But it was very, very sad. It was very sad and then when my parents got the first \$1,200 right away, they had to give it back.

LF: To?

AT: Later on they didn't. My mother was very sick.

LF: Did they get any repatriation from Germany? Did they get any reparations, rather?

AT: *Ja*, I tell you right away they came and took it away.

LF: I mean in any large amounts from your...

AT: When they, when they got a larger amount, they paid it in an old age home and they went in the old age home. This was the only thing that somebody helped them with.

LF: Help from Jewish aid.

AT: Yes, they were in Old York Road in an old age home. This was the end for my mother. My mother was--she couldn't speak English. She was very, very bad. Her Jewish was bad, too. Because in Germany we didn't talk Jewish. I learned Jewish because I learned the language pretty good. I learned Jewish, I learned Chinese, I learned English. I mean, for me, even if I hear a language, I can pick it up faster. My parents didn't had the language and they had very bad time. They were very unhappy.

LF: Very unhappy, sure. Tell me, we didn't talk about the Chinese people and how when you were in China, what your relationship with the Chinese people was?

AT: We lived in--our camps were in a very, very bombed out, poor section. This were four or five camps were from, from our people, but the Chinese, they were very, very nice people. They were very nice. You never will see a Chinese drunk, in all the years we didn't see it. They were very, very nice people. They were big pickpockets. Amazing, I am telling you, but otherwise, they are very--and I tried to like them.

LF: Did you have much contact with the Chinese?

AT: No, we went on the market and bought something and when we want something from vegetables, you know, when I had the baby I bought some carrots to, to cook for the baby. Or when you bought some inside, some inside from the animal, the Chinese don't eat this. I mean, like the liver or like something like this. You bought a

slice of liver you know, something like this, you couldn't buy much, but whatever. They were very nice, the Chinese people. On the corner was an old man with bananas, when I came with the baby sometimes he gave the baby a banana. He himself was a poor man selling a couple banana. The Chinese are very nice, good people.

LF: Tell me of your family, that--were taken away, or were you ever able to resume a relationships, find any of them, anybody that...

AT: I have one cousin in Israel. He survived. And I have one cousin in...

LF: Where had he been?

AT: He went to Israel.

LF: He wasn't in a camp?

AT: No. He went to Israel before this; he went already, I think in 1936. And I have one cousin, I was with her together in, in Berlin and she went to England. She survived too. Otherwise there is nobody.

LF: Nobody.

AT: Nobody.

LF: From your husband's family, either?

AT: No. My husband's family, *ja*, the brother in Manila, he survived.

LF: He's still in Manila?

AT: No, he is now in California.

LF: Uh huh.

AT: And the other brother, he went to...

LF: That brother was in China with you?

AT: No, he was not in China. He--my sister-in-law was working in Germany on the big bank and she knows from, from the export and import. She knows a lot of names from all over the world. And she wrote letters to all people to Australia and to Philippines and everywhere. And they were with us on the boat to Shanghai and when we stopped in Manila, they came, a couple rich Jews, and took them down. They ask for them and they came and then they arranged and they took them down from the ship. And they lived...

LF: And he stayed in Manila. What did he do there?

AT: And they stayed--oh, he got rich in Manila. He did the same thing, what he did in Germany. It's machines, coffee machines, butcher machines, like the Tischlers did this in Germany, too.

LF: And did...

AT: And the other brother, he had a ticket to Shanghai and everything packed and everything was--the suitcases, everything was all ready taken away. And then somebody from Switzerland came and took them over the border, and they were in France. First, in Switzerland, and then they were in France. But he died there. He was in the--he had it very hard and he was in the Foreign Legion, and then he died there. That's my husband's brother.

LF: And your sister-in-law, his wife?

AT: She died there, too. They both died there. There was nobody from the family.

LF: Nobody from the family.

AT: We have nobody; everybody is gone. This are the two cousins, one in Israel, and one in...

LF: Have you seen them? Have you...

AT: Well, I was in Israel. I was there. The other one I didn't see. The other one, she married. She married a fellow I was supposed to marry and she never kept friendship again. It was then I was supposed to, to get a *shiddach* [match] with this fellow. Because his sister married a nephew from my stepfather. And she had a brother and they were very friendly with my parents and they said they can make a *shiddach* between him and me. And I didn't wanted him, I don't know, I didn't wanted him, I don't know why. He was a nice fellow, but I had better plans and he went to England and a couple weeks later, it was about in '37, '38, '38 very late, my cousin, she went to England too, you know. They got jobs in the household to help people. They took the younger girls. And then I said, "Margot, if you go to England, there is Julius, make friendship with Julius." And she said to me, "Sure, what you don't want I should pick up." And that was the last one she said to me. And she even [unclear] that I could mention it she should [unclear]. And then about six weeks later, they were married in England and she never writes me.

LF: Well, I guess it is probably painful for her to do it or she's never forgotten what she said to you.

AT: She never forgot it, she never forgot it. I write sometimes, through the Holidays or once a year, I write. She writes just a card back never mention anything personal.

LF: Well, you certainly ended your life, the ending now is different then the starting was, in a different country, in a different place, and now it's like a new beginning here with your son and your grandchildren.

AT: I'm telling you, we in Shanghai, we didn't had it. It was bad enough, because we always were sick. We didn't have not much to eat and--but, if you hear other people's story, it's not to compare with Shanghai. I mean, we were, we are survivors, but in this case we had it very good.

LF: You can say that after all you've been through; you're really remarkable.

AT: That's right, I mean it in a minute in this time we went through there, it was bad. Today you think back and say, "My God, we didn't die in Auschwitz, we didn't were there. We had it better than everybody else."

LF: Well, I want to thank you very, very much for this interview. You are one of the few people that have, we've been able to interview that have had an experience in China and it's going to be a very important piece of information.

AT: I even went in art school in China. I went in art school in China.

LF: You did? Run by the Chinese?

AT: No, one man from the ORT came. I don't know where...

LF: Oh. ORT.

AT: O-R-T.

LF: ORT, I thought you said A-R-T. Excuse me. And what did you study in ORT?

AT: I took up bookbinding and picture framing. But it was very very interesting. First of all, we had the, we had the books in the library. They had to be repaired and everything, and second of all, I am a little artist, I paint my pictures and became very, not in this time, in this time I didn't have time to do it, but I did it here. It came handy that I framed my picture myself.

LF: You might have pursued a career in that, maybe that's something you could do now.

AT: Now I am too old.

LF: Oh, you are not old.

AT: Oh, I just had a birthday last week. I can tell you. I can't tell it anymore how old I am.

LF: Okay, don't tell it. But you certainly don't look it. You look great.

AT: Thank you.

LF: And you are certainly clear and speak well and have a wonderful attitude.

AT: Alright, what can you expect? You have to be, every day is a present. And every life, what we went through, and we have it so good now here. I mean if somebody say something about my America, I mean, it saved our life. We made a living here. And I have a house and I have a wonderful son. What else can I have? You can't be grateful enough.

LF: Well, it's wonderful that you can feel that way. We're lucky to have you as part of this country.

AT: It is really this way. Some people did complain and everything. No, you cannot complain. We didn't even complain in Shanghai. In Shanghai, we would say, "Alright, there's only two things, we die here or we get out."

LF: Were you shocked to hear what had happened with the concentration camps? When you got here, were you shocked?

AT: We were very shocked because we didn't take it so serious.

LF: I hear your phone and I know we talked a long time.

AT: [Pause in tape.] Well, where did you get my address, my name?

LF: It was given to me, I don't know how the Gratz College Archives got it together, but I would guess through the New Americans [survivors association], you belong to that group.

AT: I don't belong there, but I sometimes go there and I know all the people.

LF: Perhaps that was the way.

AT: Oh, that's--I know everybody from the New American because I help them always writing, the German letters from the restitution, you know. They are--everybody knows Alicia Tischler. If somebody wants to know something from Germany, from the checks or from the money, and so every time they call me and I do this for them for many years.

LF: Thank you very much Mrs. Tischler.